

## **Conclusions of Team Building Meeting**

### **Project on enhancing the capacity of developing countries in Central Asia on effective use of space applications for drought monitoring and early warning**

**18-19 March 2019**

**UN ESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand**

#### **Background**

1. The Team Building Meeting for the project on enhancing the capacity of developing countries in Central Asia on the effective use of space applications for drought monitoring and early warning through the Regional Drought Mechanism, was held at the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand, from 18 to 19 March 2019, which was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP). Government officials and experts from seven member States (China, Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Thailand and Uzbekistan) and officers from the UN Secretariat (ESCAP/IDD, OICT/GIS, OICT/EAC-Asia of UN Secretariat) participated.
2. The Team Building Meeting aimed to provide member States in Central Asia with a suitable monitoring tools and system (hereafter “system”) that consolidates drought related information across national and regional components. This system also acts as a regional node of regional drought mechanism, providing drought monitoring and early warning as well as information system to support decision making. Experiences and best practices on drought monitoring models and methodologies from member States and experts were shared and discussed among participants to explore the best suitable models to implement in Central Asian countries.
3. Representatives from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan presented on their current challenges and experience with drought management and expressed the urgent need to strengthen drought monitoring and early warning systems in their countries, as well as Central Asian countries, through developing enhanced systems and building capacity in using both geospatial and statistical data.
4. The Team Building Meeting provided an opportunity for participating member States to gain further understanding and share their expectations and desires of the project. Through the meeting member States were also able to identify common and specific challenges in drought monitoring and early warning. The participants also were able to work with experts on drought monitoring to identify key design elements of an operational architecture for the proposed system, in particular focusing on user-friendly decision-making tools, and discuss the detailed implementation plan.

## Key conclusions

5. The participants reconfirmed the value of decision-making supporting tool (s) and system(s) in addressing drought-related challenges, in particular drought monitoring and early warning systems. They highlighted the important role that geospatial data plays in drought monitoring and early warning. They also identified the importance of training and capacity building of government officials and local experts on geospatial data analysis for drought monitoring and early warning systems.
6. Participants showed support for the project implementation strategy under the consideration of long-term sustainability for the project, aiming to promote the integration of ground-based statistical data and geospatial data, taking full advantage of consolidating them as meaningful information for decision making and early warning.
7. The participants emphasized that ownership and executive sponsorship of the system initiative are the key to success of the project. Awareness of policy makers on the importance of capacity building to effectively use of space applications for drought monitoring and early warning, as well as decision support mechanism is required in order to push the project forward in systemic and sustainable ways.
8. In order to set up suitable drought monitoring tools for member States in Central Asia, such as Kyrgyzstan, it was advised to reflect local conditions and limitations in the country level. Institutional capacity building on the system, needs to be undertaken, alongside field data collection in order to build database with country specific data. A selection of suitable indices needs to be identified and considered which will then be verified, based on country climate, geography and specific conditions and needs.
9. Representatives from Kyrgyzstan expressed their expectation from the project, that drought monitoring and early warning needed to be implemented for end users in a easy and understandable manner so that the tools and systems be well integrated for future forecasting. The Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth (RADI) of Chinese Academy of Sciences/ China has expressed its commitment that RADI will support the project and its pilot project in selected country through active participation as a key player along with provision of capacity building programmes and customized DroughtWatch tools. Experts from the Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Russia also committed in supporting the implementation of the project.
10. Participants supported the proposal from Kyrgyzstan to host next meeting (tentatively as the first expert group meeting) in Kyrgyzstan around July 2019 under the leadership of the Minister of Emergency Situations (MES) of Kyrgyzstan. Experts from the Republic of Korea and Russia also expressed their willingness to co-host meetings of the project in the future.
11. The first expert group meeting will aim to:
  - a. Present customized models and systems on drought monitoring and early warning as well as decision supporting tools that could be implemented in Kyrgyzstan to Ministers and senior officers of Kyrgyzstan to gain their feedback and consideration.

- b. Conduct consultation and technical assessment with country experts and senior officers of Kyrgyzstan in order to identify specific demands, environmental/operational factors and limitations of the country.
- c. Discuss/develop a detailed implementation plan of the pilot project.

12. It was recommended that an expert group be established for the implementation of the pilot project. The expert group, consisting of technical experts from member States, the United Nations Secretariat (ESCAP-IDD/SAS and UNHQ-OICT/GIS) including UN agencies and the Contributing Partners/Organizations, will provide their expertise to support the implementation of the pilot project. Furthermore, the expert group will also focus to develop a strategic plan for long-term sustainable mechanism and framework on drought monitoring, early warning and decision support system that could be supportable not only in Central Asian countries but also in other regions.

Secondly revised: 2 April 2019